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IT TOOK AN EXPERT'S CAREFUL STUDY TO UNMASK IT.

Mory of the Clever Swindling Trick With Which a Sharper Fleeced Landon Clubmen and the Way is Which It Was Exposed.

Some years ago I used frequently to attend "at homes," in addition to giving lessons in legerdemain to ladies and gentlemen who amused themselves as amateurs in giving exhibitions of their skill at evening parties, etc. Upon one occasion, it was an "at home" at Lady A.'s town house, I had given a display of card manipulation in addition to other sleight of hand tricks. After my performance I was approached by one of the gentlemen guests.

"Allow me to congratulate you, Mr. Devant," he said, "your entertainment has given me much pleasure. Your card manipulation especially interested me. It occurs to me that with your obvious knowledge of cards and card de-ceptions you might assist me in a per-plexing affair which has been exercising my mind for some time. If you will be so good as to give me a few minutes of your time I will describe the nature of this dilemma to you, Allow me to present my card."

Having signified my willingness to

ecord the interview requested, Sir orge L. escorted me to the conserva-

tory and said:
"Let me come to the point. While watching your card manipulation, it struck me that you might probably be sequainted with some of the tricks which are resorted to by card sharpers and could set at rest some suspicions of mine concerning a certain gentleman whose luck at cards is prodigious. I am strongly of opinion that he is thing more or less than a professional sharper. This man I first encountered at the B. club, of which I am a member. He has been a frequent visttor there as a guest of a young friend of mine, also a member, who has conceived a partiality for the skillful card player and is paying a rather high price for the acquaintance.

"It is not necessary that I should state more than that my young friend is a man of ample means, obstinate to the degree of pugnacity and not a little self opinionated. Although I have tried again and again to convince him that the 'luck' of his acquaintance seems too consistent to be legitimate, he steadfastly refuses to listen to me, laring that he is not to be intimidated by a little ill fortune. And so be goes on playing—and goes on paying. I have watched the play closely, but am quite unable to detect any trick or dodge on the part of the suspected man. I cannot, therefore, put forward anything tangible to his detriment or charge him with any offense. Whatever his trick may be, it must be a very clever one and of a somewhat novel description. I have carefully exwined the cards, some methods of king which I have had described to

but have failed to trace the slightgus of their having been tamperb. The ordinary club cards are hich renders it all the more inhow the fellow contrives to ckery with them. It struck To rimps it might be a question ilation, but I could not disything beyond the ordinary It was while in this dilem at the idea occurred to me that

ar up the mystery. May I count pon your assistance?" "Certainly," I replied. "I shall be very pleased to render you what serv-

Mr. Devant, might be able to

ice I can in the matter." As a matter of fact, Sir George had piqued my curiosity, for, knowing a good deal about card trickery. I was vager to discover what cunning methed of swindling-if any-the suspected man was resorting to.

"Do you know anything about the man?" I asked.

"Very little," replied Sir George, "except that he is known as Mr. De Lacy. and is apparently of French extraction, speaking with a slight accent. Beyond this there is much that is mysterious about him. My friend knows nothing of him; he is merely one of those casual acquaintances it is so easy to make in this cosmopolitan city of ours." "What games does he favor?"

"He plays most of the gambling games, but if he has a favorite I should think it was solo."

"And in the event of my discovering any trickery, should you make a police matter of it?"

"No, I don't desire to do that. I want to unmask the fellow, expose kim there and then, convince my obstinate friend and have the sharper kicked out of the club."

I entered into the affair with zest. An appointment was fixed up for a certain evening, upon which I found myself in the card room of the B. club, bent upon creating a "seene." There was a goodly assembly of members and friends, and the room presented an animated appearance, with its groups of faultlessly attired clubmen gather ed round the little green topped tables, I was invited by Sir George to join in a friendly game, having been already introduced to his friend, Mr. V., a tall, dark, clean shaved gentleman. By design our table was placed close to that at which the suspected man, with Mr. Y, and others, was seated. I was thus enabled to watch the movements of Mr. De Lacy without exciting suspigion. I judged De Lacy to be a man turned forty, with a beard which was beginning to turn gray, rather sparse fair hair, a somewhat pallid face and broad shoulders. He did not altogeth-

er lack a certain air of refinement. The play proceeded. I had previousis taken the onportunity of examining | Hart, druggist.

A GAMBLER'S SCHEME some of the crub cards, but had found coming in any way suspicious about them. Our neighbors were playing solo, and the luck appeared to be fluc-tuating a good deal, Mr. V. winning occasionally. But this did not last

long, and presently Mr. De Lacy began to gather in a rich harvest. I watched closely, but could detect nothing to the discredit of the suspected one if you except a faculty for winning. Now and again a half muttered imprecation from Mr. V, told that De Lacy had ence more scooped the pool,

The evening was unproductive of anything practical in the way of discovering trickery, yet there was some thing indefinable about this man De Lacy which suggested fraud to me and which made me more than ever determined to solve the mystery of his wonderful "luck." I therefore arranged to attend another night under similar circumstances, but even then nothing of moment occurred. I obtained, however, a kind of vague idea, the accura-cy of which I was desirous of putting to the test. At the close of play I spoke to Sir George.

"I notice that Mr. De Lacy invariably wears smoked glasses at the table,"

said. "Has be weak sight?"
"I believe so. He says that the giare of the gas troubles his eyes."
"I have an idea that those glasses

play some sort of part in the trickery," I said thoughtfully, "I don't know how; but, coupled with a certain movement of one of his hands, they are suggestive. I propose to make a test, and I should like to make the following arrangement: I will take my place at your table, as usual, another night. After having played for awhile I shall ask to be allowed to give up on the score of being tired. You will agree and take no further particular notice of me. If I make a discovery shall I expose the man openly?"

"Certainly." replied Sir George emphatically.

The appointed night arrived. The room was full, as usual. As before, our table was situated close to that at which sat De Lacy and others. The man wore his customary look of Imperturbable good humor-and his smok ed glasses. His party was playing solo. with the usual varying luck, preponderating in the long run with De Lacy. The cards were shuffled and dealt. Two "passed," Mr. V. "propped," but De Lacy called, "Abundance."

"Again!" ejaculated Mr. V. in amaze-

De Lacy smiled indulgently. He had a splendid hand and got home easily. At this juncture I gave up as arranged, and, rising carelessly from my sent strolled a few yards with the apparent desire to "stretch my legs." I worked round by degrees until I had got directly behind De Lacy and quickly donned a pair of smoked glasses, with which I had come prepared. He had just scored another "abundance" when, gazing over his shoulder at the cards through my smoked glasses, I discovered the secret of his trickery.

"There is no playing against such luck!" protested Mr. V. half angrily. "There is no playing against such

thrust several fingers into one of his waistcoat pockets. With an exclamation of anger be rose to his feet, but staggered back when he perceived that I also was wearing smoked glasses.

"Gentlemen," I exclaimed, "It is my painful duty to inform you that you have in your midst a professional card

sharper! The whole room was immediately in an uproar. All the men left their tables and crowded around us. De Lacy at first betrayed a trembling lip, but presently, with an effort, he gained control of himself and thereafter main-

tained an air of dogged defiance. "This man." I continued, "has been marking the cards with luminous paint, a small quantity of which he keeps in his wastcoat pocket and conveys to the cards with his finger nails. The paint, quite invisible in this brilliantly lighted room, he is able to see by means of his smoked glasses. Will some of you kindly examine these cards through the glasses I brought with me for the purpose of unmasking this man? Look at my fingers, too, which I just now

thrust into his walstcoat pocket." Eagerly the clubmen crowded round me, and an examination was made all round. By the aid of the glasses the tiny paint marks of the cards were clearly detected, as well as the smear on my fingers. The fraud was fully Oregon, exposed. With cries of indignation the clubmen advanced upon the trickster. and things began to look ugly for the ingenious De Lacy. He was very roughly handled, denuded of his ill gotten gains and then literally kicked

out of the club, Mr. V., convinced at last that he bad been fleeced by an unscrupulous rogue, tendered an apology to his fellow members for introducing under a misapprehension such a disreputable individual into the club, an apology that was, of course, at once accepted. He also

thanked Sir George and myself. I have not since heard or seen anything of Mr. De Lacy, under that or any other name. He doubtless considered it expedient to seek fresh woods and pastures new after his disconcerting experiences, but his trick was a smart one, perhaps the smartest I have ever encountered.—Wide World.

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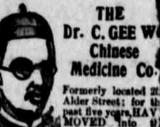
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